

that they were separated by divine decree, but that once a year, on this night, if it does not rain, magpies build with their wings a bridge across the Milky Way and over it the weaver passes to her spouse and spends a day with him. It is peculiarly a woman's festival.

Also in the seventh month is the festival for the departed spirits, mentioned in the preceding chapter.

The harvest festival is celebrated in the eighth month and culminates on the fifteenth day of that month, at the full moon. It is a time when debts are supposed to be paid, although this is not so necessary as at the beginning of the New Year. It is sometimes called the moon's birthday and at least in some parts of the country moon cakes are made, with a crescent on them and perhaps the image of a pagoda or an effigy of the rabbit which to Chinese imagination is supposed to be seen on the face of the full orb. It is a time of rejoicing and feasting for all ages and is very much a children's festival. Many quaint and pretty customs have been connected with it.

Confucius's birthday has been observed, especially by the schools, on the twenty-seventh day of the eighth month, but since 1931 according to the solar calendar. Of late the commemoration has been perfunctory and little popular interest attaches to it.

A festival on the ninth day of the ninth month may represent the coming of the first frosts in the North where the custom seems to have originated. As a precaution against calamity (so at least some have believed) people betake themselves to a high place—the top of a hill or the city wall. It is a time of happy excursions and picnics.

The last great festival of the year is that of the winter solstice, It is devoted especially to family gatherings and

honors to an-
cestors. Formerly it was also the occasion for the
major one of
the annual sacrifices at which the Emperor
officiated, that on the
Altar of Heaven.

In addition to the holidays in which the majority
of the popu-
lation have participated, other events have brought
diversion into
the routine of life—birthdays, religious
pilgrimages, market days
in towns where these are customary, and festivals
peculiar to a
particular religion, especially those of Buddhism.
Life has by no
means gone on without variation.